

[How's this working for you?] Clarifying the LP Award System

by [arma](#) » Fri Nov 25, 2011 5:28 am

You can just go ahead and admit it, it's one of them holidays, and you're used to get some freaky long-ish post from me around the holidays. You've been sitting there, stuffed with turkey, pressing F5 all the time, afraid you'd be called away to clean some plates or pans and miss all the excitement on the new forums, haven't you?

So, don't let me hold this up any longer...

This time around, it's not a shiny preview for the new content in the next book, but the first of a series of clarifications / guidelines I'm intending to start over here. Because this is a first, I'm throwing this at you as an open test of sorts, expecting some input in return, especially if it actually helped you in some fashion.

As the topic title indicates, it's about the way you're supposed to award Legend Points in Earthdawn. So this is going to take a bit...

The Basics

Here are some terms you need to know, quickly explained:

LP: Short for Legend Point(s). I'm a lazy guy.

Session: One gathering of your gaming group, an evening (afternoon, etc.) of play, maybe 3-5 hours, maybe longer. This is the interval which LP are awarded for. Note a session does not relate in any way to fictional time. You get together at the table, play the game, you part ways: that's the session.

Adventure: A self-contained piece of your story. An adventure can be one or several sessions, and may or may not be part of a campaign. At the end of the adventure, there's a small bonus LP award, but otherwise, the adventure has nothing to do with awarding LP.

LP Award(s): In every session, you award LP for five individual items, these are the LP Awards.

Session Award: The sum of the five LP Awards, the total of the LP you award for the session.

Adventure Goal Award: A sixth LP Award you hand out in the final session of an adventure. It becomes part of the Session Award. We won't get into this below, you can handle it like the Session Goal Award that is discussed below.

LP Award Table: Found on p. 98 of the *Gamemaster's Guide*. You'll need to look at this (you don't need to look at the rest of the text). The table has three columns. The first column shows a character's Circle. The second column shows what one LP Award for a character of that Circle is supposed to be. The awards are given in ranges that you can choose from, with the average (middle value) of the range in parentheses. For example, a First Circle LP Award reads "25—75 (50)". The third column shows what the Session Award (the sum of the LP Awards) for that character is supposed to be. For example, for First Circle, "100—300 (200)". You'll note that it is four times of what the LP Award column says, despite there being five LP Awards per session. Imagine it as a security margin of sorts for now.

The Quick and Dirty Way

If you're new to this, if you're in a hurry, or if you really don't bother that much with the details, you can determine what a session's worth of play is very quickly. On p. 98 of the *Gamemaster's Guide*, you'll find the Legend Award Table. The first column lists a character's Circle. In the third column, you'll find a number in parentheses. For every character, determine what Circle he is, and award the character the number in parentheses for the evening. For example, if a character is 2nd Circle, he gets 800LP.

The Quick Way

If you don't like it that simple, or that uniform, you'll also find a range for the typical LP to Award for a session in that third column. The number in parentheses is the average of that range, if a character performed better or worse, find an appropriate number within the range. For example, when the Second Circle character from above performed at his worst, you might award just the minimum of 400LP. If he got everything out of the evening there was to get, you might award the maximum of 1,200LP. You can choose anything from within the range, keeping in mind that the number in parentheses represents an average performance.

The Long and Hard Way

The long and hard way to award LP allows you to customize the award towards individual aspects of a character's performance. It's not only instructions for what the characters get, the rules here also tell you what you as the gamemaster are supposed to provide, how to tie things together, and what to keep in mind when planning an adventure.

Sessions and Adventures (When and how often?)

Earthdawn awards LP for completing sessions and adventures. A session is one gathering of your group, for example one evening of play. An adventure is a piece of self-contained story; it can consist of just one or of several sessions. It is important to note the difference that one is what happens in the real world, and the other happens in the fictional universe of Barsaive. Earthdawn wants to reward the players' participation first, so most of the LP are awarded based on when you sit down at the table.

The session is the cornerstone for awarding LP, the completion of the adventure merely provides a little bonus. You should award the LP directly at the end of the session, not wait until the end of the adventure. This gives your players direct feedback, and prevents you from forgetting some detail from four weeks ago that should have gone into awarding LP, but didn't stick in your memory.

Character Awards (For Whom?)

The Awards are determined individually for each character, which means all that follows below refers to one character only. You never add anything together to award to the whole group, and you never have an amount of LP that you divide between players.

While the awards are supposed to be per-character, you'll note that some make more sense when the group's total performance is measured, as they can achieve some of them together, as they refer to goals the whole group can achieve. In this case, you simply award the same amount to

every character, though the award itself is still per-character.

For such awards, you can measure each character's contribution to the group's goals separately, but for simplicity, we won't do so below.

LP Awards (What for?)

Every session, a character has the opportunity to earn five LP Awards, completing the adventure awards a sixth in its final session. The five individual LP Awards are more or less a list you check off. You have an LP Award for each of:

- 1. Conflicts
- 2. Roleplaying
- 3. Individual Deeds ("Heroics")
- 4. Gathering Treasure
- 5. Completing the Session Goal

If a character fulfilled the requirements for an LP Award, he gets a specific amount of LP (more on that later), one LP Award per item on the list.

You are also supposed to allow characters the opportunity to earn the awards, which means you are supposed to build in situations, gamemaster characters, objects and items, and so on that allows the characters to earn the LP Award. For example, plan conflicts, determine if there is treasure, provide situations where characters can act heroically. You can't always plan for every contingency, but should try to do so where possible. If one of the Awards does not make sense for your current session, for example finding treasure is not an option, you should compensate for it in one of the following sessions.

Award Composition (How much?)

So you are supposed to hand out five of these "Awards", but how much is that in actual LP? The table on p. 98 *Gamemaster's Guide* defines the worth of one Award, based on Circle. For example, a single Award for a First Circle character reads "25—75 (50)". You can choose any number from 25 to 75 for an Award, with 50 being the average. The amount is variable to allow you to tailor the Award to the character's actual performance. For example, a small heroic deed might only be worth 25LP, while several heroic deeds or a major heroic feat during a session may be worth 75LP. Keep in mind, though, that you only award LP for actual challenges, and for things that actually happened. For example, fighting a mounted ork scorcher one-on-one is challenging for a First Circle character on foot, and awards LP for conflict. Say, 60LP. If the scorcher were on foot, it might not be as much of a challenge, and you would choose a lower value within the range provided, maybe only 40LP. The same fight is probably not even worth playing out for a Seventh Circle character, it is no challenge at all, and does not even constitute an opportunity to earn an LP Award. Just the same, if the First Circle character runs from the scorcher, he doesn't get any LP. Once you checked off all the items on the list, you add them up, the result is the amount of LP awarded at the end of the session. You can tell the players the exact composition of the Session Award if you like, or even save yourself the trouble of adding everything together in the first place and tell them each award individually.

An Example

We have a First Circle character. The adventure deals with a murdered count. In this session, the group is supposed to find the actual murderer. You look at your list of LP Awards (1 through 5 from above) and the LP Award ranges provided on the table (for First Circle, 25 to 75LP) and think about how the First Circle character fared in the session:

- 1. **Conflicts:** There was a minor fight with the count's murderer at the end: 40 LP
- 2. **Roleplaying:** The player performed as usual, talking to people, acting out his character's persona, etc.: 50 LP
- 3. **Individual Deeds ("Heroics"):** At one point during the chase, the character jumped between rooftops to catch the murderer: 70LP
- 4. **Gathering Treasure:** You didn't build in any treasure: 0LP
- 5. **Completing the Session Goal:** The group didn't do so well, the murderer almost got away, could only be caught due to the character chasing him over rooftops: 30LP.

This leaves you with a total Session Award of 190LP for that character. Another character might have gotten more, or less. For example, all the characters might share the same Session Goal Award, but only the example character did the rooftop chase.

In the next session, the group might conclude the adventure by finding out who hired the murderer. To do this, they'll have to find someone who can give clues as to the grey eminence's identity. This might look as follows for our First Circle character:

- 1. **Conflicts:** The grey eminence was a tough magician: 60 LP.
- 2. **Roleplaying:** The player had a brilliant negotiation with an informant, but it wasn't a lot about playing out his character: 50 LP.
- 3. **Individual Deeds ("Heroics"):** No special deeds performed: 0LP.
- 4. **Gathering Treasure:** The group grabbed the magician's magical staff, a powerful item: 75LP.
- 5. **Completing the Session Goal:** They found the informant leading them to the magician, but they had to pay him more than the information was worth: 40LP.
- 6. **Completing the Adventure Goal:** The group managed to find out all there was about the count's murder: 75LP.

This leaves you with a total Session Award of 300LP for that character. Again, other characters might fare better or worse, for example one might actually have acted out some heroics.

You now look at the third column on the LP Award Table, which can act as a control sum of sorts: If your total Session Award falls outside of this range, something went “wrong” one way or the other. In our first example session, we awarded 190LP, while 200LP is supposed to be the average. Maybe it is a minor under-performance, maybe you didn’t build in enough opportunities to shine (but remember, you can compensate in a later session, for example with a bigger treasure). In the second example session, we awarded 300LP, a bit more than the average, but there was the additional award for completing the adventure that figured into the total, and you compensated for the lacking treasure in the first session with a powerful item which netted more LP.

The Individual Pieces

It isn’t always easy to gauge what the five individual LP Awards represent, and there’s no simple solution for you from me either. For the most obvious example: Who am I to judge what your group considers part of Roleplaying, or what constitutes good roleplaying? Here are some notes on handling all the other things nonetheless:

Conflicts: A Conflict is a confrontation that tests the characters’ abilities and that might go either way. Most of the time, they’ll get into fights (and we’ll get to that further below). But it might also represent a difficult negotiation where failure might have dire consequences, or avoiding a fight by sneaking past the guards, or talking your way past them. Usually, the group will participate equally here, which means everybody gets the same LP. Sometimes, a single character may not be present, if so he gets no LP for it. Sometimes, there may be something akin to a duel. For example, part of talking your way past the guards might involve challenging their leader to a duel. This should be considered under Individual Deeds for the character.

Individual Deeds (“Heroics”): This is the most individual of the awards, though it represents two things: First, if a character contributed more or less than the others towards achieving the group’s goals (even though the group talked the guards into the duel, the Swordmaster fought it). In our above example, the character got LP for a rooftop chase. Even though it led lead to completing the Session Goal, it was that character’s individual contribution only. Second, if a character risked his hide or acted selflessly on behalf of others, and not necessarily himself too, or of he achieved a feat worth telling by Troubadours. Just asked yourself, if the adventure were reported on the news, who and what would get screen time?

Gathering Treasure: Treasure is all the unusual things the characters can find. It’s not the purse taken from ork scorchers (we call that Loot), it’s the magician’s staff, a trophy, or a long-lost chest of gold at the end of a treasure map. Some creatures note that they provide “Treasure worth Legend Points”, this fulfils the requirements for the award (by building in the creature, you gave the opportunity to get the Conflict and Treasure awards), but only if they take it. Note that it does not matter if the group keeps or sells the treasure. In most cases, you will also want to award this to everyone in the group, even if in the end, only one keeps the item (the magician’s staff may only be of value to the group’s Elementalist, but they found it together nonetheless). If one character grabs it in secret, for example if the Thief sneaks into the magician’s tower and steals the staff, you can award it to that character only, although that might also represent a Deed.

Completing Goals: In my example above, you’ll have noticed I actually judged how well the group achieved the goals. That’s not necessary per se, you could just as well award them the flat average. More of a problem may be if you don’t set any goals, especially for the session, for example if you just play for as long as time or your tolerance on coffee intake permits, or if you don’t want to or can’t really plan out a session in that detail. If one of these is that case, you can either simply award the flat amount “for showing up”. Or you can make the goals independent from the gaming sessions and specify “milestones” within your adventure roughly around the session framework.

The Conflict Award and Creatures

Now this is technically implied in the detailed look at the LP Awards above, but because it is rather unusual for many games, I’ll say it explicitly: There’s no set amount of LP any single creature is worth. Likewise, several fights in a session don’t net a player several LP Awards for Conflicts.

Now, creatures have a characteristic called “Legend Award”. The ork scorcher (p. 87 *Gamemaster’s Guide*) tells you that he’s a “First Circle” Legend Award. But you’re not supposed to go to the LP Award table, look up First Circle, and then determine that the scorcher is worth 25 to 75 LP. You can do that, but it’s not what you’re supposed to. The entry tells you that the ork scorcher is a sufficient challenge for one First Circle character (and the Creatures chapter tells you what to make of that, namely that you use one scorcher per player character in a single fight). And maybe it should be called “Challenge” instead of “Legend Award”. So if you’re so inclined, simply think of it that way. So it boils down to: if there have been one (or more) Conflicts in the session, there’s one LP Award (and no more). The only way to distinguish between tougher and weaker creatures, or the number of creatures, or the number of fights, is within the ranges for the LP Award. We already had an example above, a mounted scorcher versus one on foot. He’s more of a danger when mounted, so that leads to a higher LP Award. Even if a character fought ten scorchers, he only gets one award. You would amply reward that with the maximum amount then, and maybe it also qualifies for LP for heroics, but there’s still only one reward for the Conflict side of things. In the scorcher example, we also said a Seventh Circle character wouldn’t get any LP. That’s because the scorcher is no challenge, and even if 25 to 75 LP is not much for a Seventh Circle character, he shouldn’t even get this small amount (which is why assigning a creature an amount doesn’t work out anyway, it’s just one more look at the table and doesn’t change the numbers).

The Big Picture

Here’s an additional bit the book wouldn’t tell you. The LP Awards, more specifically the average Session Award, was set to a fraction of the minimum amount a character needs to advance to the next Circle, give and take a bit to round up or down. It’s not an exact science that’ll work out perfectly in your game, since characters can choose different starting ranks for their talents, spend LP on Karma, skills, and Talent Options, but if you are constant in using the LP award system, you’ll get a constant but declining increase in character Circle.

The amounts required are also used, with a slight modifier to allow for additional skills and such, for the system of **Creating Experienced Characters** found in the *Player’s Companion*.

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